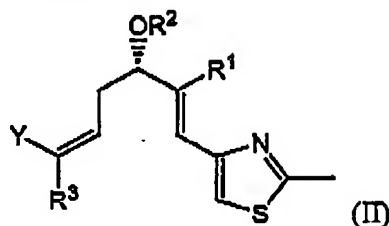


Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Claims 1-58 (Canceled)

59. (New) A compound of formula II



wherein

R<sup>1</sup> is C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>4</sub> alkyl,

R<sup>2</sup> is benzyl, p-methoxybenzyl (PMB), trimethyl-silyl, 2-(trimethylsilyl)ethoxymethyl (SEM), tetrahydropyranyl, methoxymethyl, benzyloxymethoxymethyl, benzoyl, or acetyl,

R<sup>3</sup> is hydrogen or C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>4</sub> alkyl,

Y is CO<sub>2</sub>R<sup>4</sup>, CHO, CH=CH<sub>2</sub> or CH<sub>2</sub>R<sup>5</sup>,

R<sup>4</sup> is C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>4</sub> alkyl or an optionally substituted benzyl group,

R<sup>5</sup> is halogen, hydroxy, p-toluenesulfonate or -OSO<sub>2</sub>B, and

B is C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>4</sub> alkyl or C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>4</sub> perfluoroalkyl.

60. (New) A compound according to claim 59, wherein

R<sup>1</sup> is C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>4</sub> alkyl,

R<sup>2</sup> is p-methoxybenzyl,

R<sup>3</sup> is methyl,

Y is CO<sub>2</sub>R<sup>4</sup>, and

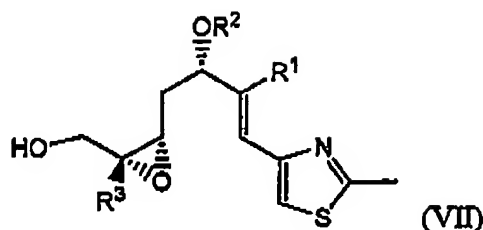
R<sup>4</sup> is C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>4</sub> alkyl.

61. (New) A compound according to claim 69, wherein

R<sup>1</sup> is C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>4</sub> alkyl,

$R^2$  is p-methoxybenzyl,  
 $R^3$  is hydrogen or  $C_1$ - $C_4$  alkyl, and  
 $Y$  is  $CO_2$ -ethyl.

62. (New) A compound of formula VII



wherein

$R^1$  is hydrogen or  $C_1$ - $C_4$  alkyl,  
 $R^2$  is benzyl, p-methoxybenzyl (PMB), trimethyl-silyl-2-(trimethylsilyl)ethoxymethyl (SEM), tetrahydropyranyl, methoxymethyl, benzyloxymethoxymethyl, benzoyl, or acetyl, and  
 $R^3$  is hydrogen or  $C_1$ - $C_4$  alkyl.

63. (New) A compound of formula VII according to claim 62 wherein

$R^1$  is hydrogen or  $C_1$ - $C_4$  alkyl,  
 $R^2$  is p-methoxybenzyl, and  
 $R^3$  is hydrogen or  $C_1$ - $C_4$  alkyl.

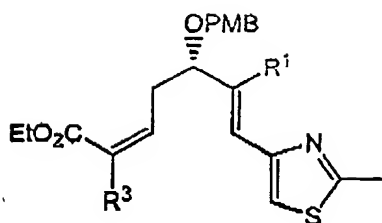
64. (New) A compound according to claim 59, wherein  $R^4$  is  $C_{1-4}$  alkyl or a benzyl radical which is substituted by an electron-donating substituent.

65. (New) A compound according to claim 59, wherein  $R^4$  is  $C_{1-4}$  alkyl, p-methoxybenzyl or 2,4-dimethoxybenzyl.

66. (New) A compound according to claim 59, wherein  $R^5$  is bromine or iodine.

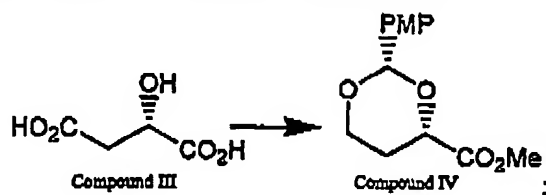
67. (New) A compound according to claim 59, wherein  $R^1$  is  $CH_3$ .

68. (New) A compound according to claim 59, wherein  $R^3$  is  $CH_3$ .
69. (New) A compound according to claim 59, wherein  $R^2$  is p-methoxybenzyl (PMB).
70. (New) A compound according to claim 59, wherein Y is  $COOR^4$ .
71. (New) A compound according to claim 59, wherein Y is  $CO_2$ -Ethyl.
72. (New) A compound according to claim 59, wherein Y is  $CH_2R^5$ .
73. (New) A compound according to claim 62, wherein  $R^3$  is  $CH_3$ .
74. (New) A compound according to claim 62, wherein  $R^2$  is p-methoxybenzyl (PMB).
75. (New) A compound according to claim 62, wherein  $R^1$  is  $CH_3$ .
76. (New) A compound according to claim 59, wherein said compound is (5S,2Z,6E)-2,6-Dimethyl-5-[(4-ethoxyphenyl)-methoxy]-7-(2-methylthiazol-4-yl)hepta-2,6-dienoic acid-ethyl ester.
77. (New) A compound according to claim 59, wherein said compound is (5S,2Z,6E)-2,6-Dimethyl-5-[(4-methoxyphenyl)methoxy]-7-(2-methylthiazol-4-yl)hepta-2,6-dienol.
78. (New) A compound according to claim 59, wherein said compound is (5S,2Z,6E)-2,6-Dimethyl-2,3-epoxy-5-[(4-methoxyphenyl)-methoxy]-7-(2-methylthiazol-4-yl)hept-6-enol.
79. (New) A process for the preparation of a compound of formula IIa

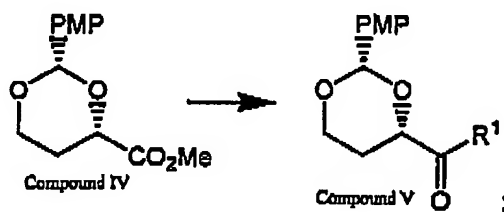


comprising:

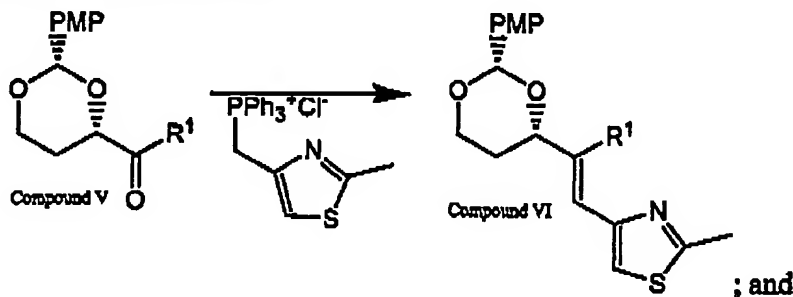
converting the .alpha.-hydroxy acid function with trifluoroacetic acid/methanol of (S)-maleic acid (III) to methyl ester, reducing the still present acid function with diborane in tetrahydrofuran to alcohol, and converting the (S)-(-)-methyl-2,4-dihydroxyester that is obtained with p-methoxybenzylidimethylacetal to the cyclic acetal (IV),



converting the methyl ester with a C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>4</sub> alkyl-organometallic compound to obtain the corresponding alkyl ketone (V),

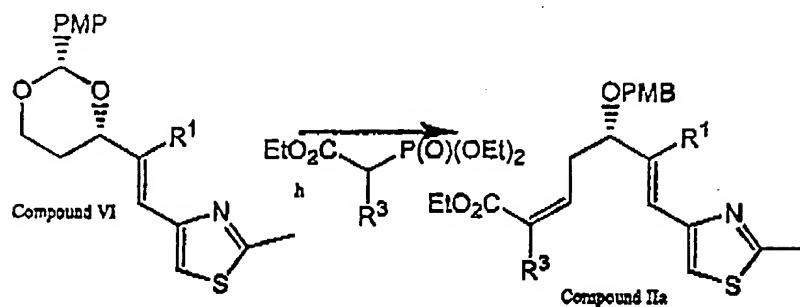


reacting the (C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>4</sub>) alkyl ketone (V) in a Wittig reaction with the thiazolylphosphonium salt, and separating the E-isomer (VI),



converting the E-isomer (VI) by reaction with diisobutylaluminum hydride, by Swern oxidation, by Wadsworth-Homer-Bmmons condensation with ethyl-2-diethoxyphosphinylpropionate or by treatment with a Horner reagent that corresponds to R<sup>3</sup>,

and/or by purification of E-isomers to the Z- $\alpha,\beta$ -unsaturated ester (IIa).



wherein

PMP is p-methoxyphenyl, and

PMB is p-methoxybenzyl.--